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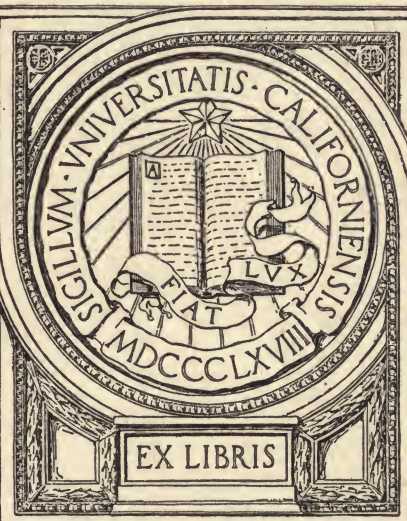

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I C T O R Y

By JAMES A. EMERY

MAR 14 1919

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VICTORY

AN ADDRESS

BY

JAMES A. EMERY

DELIVERED AT THE BOHEMIAN CLUB
ON THE OCCASION OF "VICTORY NIGHT"
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1918

SAN FRANCISCO
THE BOHEMIAN CLUB
1919

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

Gift

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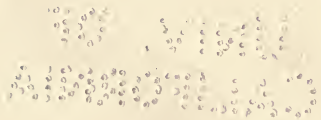

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

FOREWORD

THE EVENING *of Tuesday, December 3, 1918, had been set apart in the Bohemian Club as the occasion of the Club's Thanksgiving Dinner. For twenty years the Christmas Dinner has been a feature of the Club's calendar; the Thanksgiving Dinner was instituted as an annual event in 1917. On that first occasion, the Christmas ceremonial of bringing in the Swan was gaily imitated by choristers, in black face, accompanying a great bronze gobbler, borne aloft in a gilded cage. The Jinks Committee were preparing a repetition of this Thanksgiving Dinner when the news of the armistice called the whole civilized world to a feast of thanksgiving. At once the Committee renamed the evening of December 3rd "Victory Night," and organized its ceremonies accordingly. In the great cage, designed to hold the feathered captive of the usual festival, was borne, instead, the squatting figure of a Turk, and the cage was followed by a member of the Club, an Armenian, in cook's uniform, brandishing*

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a knife in triumph. The music of the evening was furnished by the Club band, supplying the martial tone befitting a feast of thanksgiving for victory. To accommodate the volume of this tone, the dinner was served in the Jinks Room, with the band upon the stage. The Jinks Room holds comfortably, at small tables, 335 places; on this occasion, 410 members and guests were served. Service was so difficult on account of this crowding of the space that an extra hour elapsed before the black coffee came upon the tables and the speaking began.

It was before an audience held overlong in its places by congested conditions and resulting delays that Mr. James A. Emery, of Washington, D. C., a new member of the Club, arose to speak, toward the end of the program. Those who remember the alternating hush and applause by which his impressive address was attended and the enthusiastic tribute accorded his thrilling concluding sentence, and those who, unfortunately absent, heard only the subsequent appreciative comment, join in knowledge of the demand in response to which this address is now published for distribution to the membership.

"Victory Night" in Bohemia was in creditable accord with its inspiring theme. The function opened with a toast to the Commander-in-chief of the American forces, the President of the United States, followed immediately by a song in honor of the President, written by William Henry Carruth, composed by Edwin Lemare, and sung by Lowell Redfield, in uniform. Other songs were rendered by Jerome Uhl and by Charles Bulotti, who sang a composition by W. J. McCoy, words by Charles K. Field, entitled "Come Home, Boys." Henry A. Melvin read a paper in burlesque of the latest Grove Play, to take the place of the "Afterglow," which the Club had been obliged to forego on account of restrictions due to the epidemic. Following Mr. Emery's address, here presented, after an interruption in character by F. A. Denicke, who gave a skit on Club conditions, in burlesque of the Densmore dictaphone, the program was concluded with Witter Bynner's stirring "Canticle of Praise," rendered by the author and Sam Hume, as cantors, the band participating.

At the speakers' table were seated officers of the American army and navy and officers

of the British army. During the evening, the gathering had given a rousing welcome to Colonel Lubigniac of the French army and officers of his contingent, in San Francisco en route to Siberia; the "Canticle" ended with the audience standing and shouting the triumphal "Marseillaise."

The foregoing is a sketch of the setting of Mr. Emery's address. The spirit of the occasion is excellently expressed by him in the words which follow.

VICTORY

Mr. President, Officers of the Allied Armies, and Fellow Members:

LET me at this first opportunity acknowledge the privilege of the last phrase. Your courtesy, more generous than its fame, gives to the face of every stranger the features of a friend.

But, sir, I feel that tonight however sparkling the surface of this fellowship, even here within this place of light and laughter, its depths are stirred as never before, by the fresh significance of yonder colors newly consecrated with sacrifice, by the inspiring presence of these participants in the great drama, by the realization of the yet startling and incredible fact that victory is ours, and anxious ears already catch the distant tread of our returning host.

This, sir, is neither the time nor place to enumerate the causes nor conjecture the consequences of this awful conflict. This is the hour of rejoicing and gratitude, of glorious and appalling recollection. The swirl of the struggle is still about us, the sound of its guns

still echoes through the world, its stupendous panorama rises before the imagination like a vision of Doré.

In the magnitude and splendor of its scene and action, the mingling horror and sublimity of its human circumstance, the soul-shaking memory of catastrophic disaster averted, of defeat transformed into victory by courage unparalleled, sacrifice unequaled, leadership unmatchable; in the physical, moral and political changes wrought in shapes of states and in the minds and relations of men and nations, this war is the most tremendous far-reaching social tragedy in the records of the race.

The world has been its stage, mankind its cast, all history its setting. From "the isles of Greece where burning Sappho loved and sung" to the remote steppes of Siberia where the Czech-Slovak Anabasis marked the renaissance of a race, it unfolded its thrilling action. Warriors of the Prophet and soldiers of the Antipodes fought among the relics of the Trojan well; Samuri and Prussian locked in death-grip for the soil of Confucius; the Wolf-whelped breed held the gates of the Doges against the blows of the Magyar; children of the Bowery and "South of the Slot,"

brigaded with Mayfair and Petticoat Lane, pounded the Bavarian where eleven centuries before Charles Martel hammered the Saracenic invader.

Tonight a new Godfrey de Bouillon throws his Christian guard around the Holy Sepulchre. In Gethsemane's garden a British soldier holds watch where the faithful failed. From beneath the shadow of the Pyramids the First Consul called thirty centuries to the inspiration of his legions. Allenby from beside the tomb of Eve might have summoned the Mother of the race and invoked recorded time to witness this "twilight of the Kings"!

No community was too remote, no office too exalted, no calling too humble to be affected by this struggle or to participate in it. Empires and republics, ruler and subject, president and citizen, both sexes, childhood, youth and age, soldier and civilian, gave life, wealth and service to that far-flung battle-line, drawing its support and inspiration from the mines, the fields, the forests, the factories, the anxious homes of three continents and a score of nations.

It seems but yesterday, for all the intervening century of event, that August morning, little more in time than Bull Run to

Appomattox, when the gray-clad Father of Famine led his locust legions over the Belgian boundary. From that hour he made the business of life the manufacture of death. All the mind and hand of man had originated, applied and developed to sustain and expand civilized progress were diverted overnight into agencies of defense or destruction. From the heights of the sky, even into places remote from the Front, death rained upon soldier and civilian; from the depths of the sea it struck unseen its mortal blow. Over tortuous far-reaching ditches of death, high up the Alpine ice played awful never-ceasing lightning that blasted into blindness, mutilation and gasping horror. Beside these four years of hideous, never-ending, unsparing frightfulness, distinguishing neither sex nor age, Waterloo shrinks to an affair of outposts and Gettysburg assumes the proportions of a skirmish.

But, sir, the very efficiency of Germany's machinery of destruction became but a measure of the sublime and invincible courage of her intended victims. While memory lives, who shall forget that King who sacrificed the body of his state to save her soul, whose victorious defeat preserved the allied cause

and made vassal every heart that loves a knightly deed? What Virgil praising arms shall picture the best blood of Britain and her dominions, grimly enduring through those first terrible months that deadly hail with slight protection and but feeble power of response, yet answering as always with eager bodies the battle-cry of Shakespeare's Henry:

"Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;
Or close the wall up with our English dead!"

What Homer shall ever greatly tell the tale of France in such a trial as comes to nations and may be endured but once? Within the first thirty days of invasion her greatest sources of fuel and iron, her leading industrial centers were seized or devastated and an eighth of her population held in captivity and servitude. Her cities crumbled, her proud capital often assailed and always threatened, her manhood drained in conflict with superior numbers, while Britain prepared and America hesitated, her spirit never failed, her courage never faltered. In the darkness, she doubted not the dawn. Out of immeasurable suffering and loss, her soul mounted to new heights of resolution and sacrifice, rising above ruin and death like the shattered shaft

of Rheims lifting above the mortal desolation of the plain the mutilated but unconquerable emblem of her faith. In a land where every hillside had become a battlefield and "every sod beneath the feet a soldier's sepulchre," the very dead had burst their sepulchre to stop the tongue of despair or surrender.

To such Allies we became united, in such scenes destined participants. Unprepared, undisciplined, unarmed, we went down to Armageddon. Even in that moment Russia dissolved into an impotent debating society. Shortly Servia was crushed, Rumania in ruins, Italy pressed to the walls of Venice. The Allied fortunes moved from bad to worse while America organized. But even in that hour of crisis our people found themselves. Out of the gloom came light. Doubt and uncertainty hardened into resolution. Yielding overnight to unaccustomed discipline and restraint, the Nation poured its eager youth into camp, its boundless wealth into the Treasury, its labor into every essential process of war production, its practical leadership into every place of public service.

Out of the chaos and confusion of giant effort slowly emerged the shapes of system

and order. The heterogeneous elements of our citizenship, refuting the cynical faith of our adversary, fused in the living fire of the national cause. In the face of the impossible, two million American soldiers ready to meet the debt of Lafayette and Yorktown stood upon the soil of France.

Even as they poured overseas fell the last great staggering blows of desperate Germany. Reeling backward under their impact, war-worn, Poilu and Tommy, retreating, demoralized, met the American Marine at Chateau Thierry, standing at bay in the very focal point of destiny, saw, astounded, the veteran hordes of the onrushing enemy halt, yield and fall before the fresh brawn of the West like ripe grain before the reaper. Inspired by that spectacle of critical valor, Briton and Frenchman revived, rallied, reorganized, and over the very pathway of defeat returned to unbroken victory. Within a hundred days of that memorable morning "Deutschland über Alles" echoed no more through the air of France and the Marseillaise was rising from German throats in the streets of Berlin.

Thank God, despite our hours of weakness, doubt and vacillation, America was

not too late. Thank God, despite the poison of the pacifist, we learned in time that the murderous campaign of the German submersible could never be ended by the venal rhetoric of a Chautauqua submissible. Thank God, we can not only enunciate great truths, but still have the will and the faith to vindicate them in the blood of our bodies. Thank God for all self-effacing men who nobly did the work at home, for that American womanhood that sent and served its men and in every place of famine, wounds and disease descended like white hosts of ministering angels. Thank God for our heroes on land and sea whose service and immortal sacrifice vindicate the outraged rights of the nation and preserve the imperiled cause of civilization. Thank God that out of this bloody tragedy emerges the triumph of representative institutions, with new and greater opportunity for the nation and mankind.

For a century our political ideals and institutions have captivated the minds as our material progress stirred the imagination of men. Stimulated by our practical exemplification of humanitarian precept successfully operating, Republicanism drove Monarchy from our Continent and transformed the

Third Empire. But now civilization conquers autocracy to find anarchy lurking in its ruins and shouting democracy. We stirred an ancient order with precept; may we guide the new with the practical example of ordered liberty, developed through a thousand years of hard racial experience but struggling successfully onward and upward to reconcile individual freedom with expanding social progress, under self-imposed restraint. Shall we hold this torch for darkened minds or dim it in the winds of the hour? Have we blazed the trail for others but to follow the lost? Have we fought the despotism of a single autocrat to surrender to the tyranny of many? Demonstrating in a life-and-death struggle the practical as well as the moral superiority of the individually developed state over the state-developed individual, are we now to compromise or parley with Bolshevism or State Socialism, by whatever name, however plausible its guise, however reputable its sponsors or respectable its company? Or shall we yield to like forces in other forms and weakly color the very administration of law in the face of intolerable social threat? The very existence of popular government demands that it shall not merely resist the con-

sequences — but possess the power and the will to control and suppress the causes—of social disorder.

But, sir, whatever the perplexities of the future, this hour holds the splendid vision of glorious achievement. For tonight the battle is ended. Heroic France folds to her breast the children of her lost provinces. Italy, redeemed, greets again her Roman mother. Albert, restored, sits once more upon the Belgian throne. Down the sea-aisle of surrender has passed the broken Armada. The Crescent descends in the Levant, our triumphant fleet rides in the Golden Horn. The Crown of the Hapsburgs hangs upon the cradle of the Slavic Republic. In the very citadel of military autocracy Socialism and Anarchy struggle for the mastery of Prussia. Somewhere tonight along that conquered border, an American soldier, perhaps a Californian, possibly one of this fellowship, keeps the Watch on the Rhine.

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FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE BOHEMIAN CLUB
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